

# SYMBOLS OF DEFIANCE

Hidden behind the routine... was fought a war of wills for moral supremacy—endless struggle, as bitter as it was unspoken, between the captors and the captives... the main objective of the whole Japanese prison program was to break our spirit, and on our side was a stubborn determination to keep our self-respect whatever else they took from us.

— MAJ. JAMES DEVEREUX, POW IN THE PACIFIC, WORLD WAR II



▲ American soldiers on Luzon with heads bowed near Cement Cross, now located at the National Prisoner of War Museum in Andersonville, GA. COURTESY BETTMANN ARCHIVES

## AFTER THE FALL OF BATAAN IN 1942,

50,000 American and Filipino survivors became captives of the Japanese at Camp O'Donnell, Luzon, Philippine Islands. As exhaustion, disease and starvation killed hundreds of men each day, the Japanese presented Captain Wilson, the American supply officer with a "present." The present: a sack of cement; the command: "Now, courtesy of Imperial Japanese Army, you make shrine for men who die."

And so, in memory of their fallen comrades, and in defiance of the Japanese (who no doubt expected a Shinto shrine) the Americans built a cement cross. Fittingly, the inscription did not contain the word "prisoner," reflecting the men's refusal to concede anything to their captors. It was this kind of spirit that sustained hundreds of POWs during their captivity. This same spirit drove the survivors of Camp O'Donnell to insure that the cross had a permanent place of honor at the National Prisoner of War Museum in Andersonville.

▼ In direct violation of camp rules, POWs at a camp in the Philippines celebrate Fourth of July in 1942, even though discovery by Japanese guards would have meant death. Sadly, three-quarters of the men in this photo died on

the "hell ships" used to take them to Japan in 1944. Some died from suffocation and starvation on board the crowded ships. Others died when the unmarked convoy was torpedoed by U.S. submarines. COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

